

# The Pocahontas Times.

Andrew & Norman Price, Owners.

"Montani Semper Liberi"

Andrew Price, Editor

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## THE WEEKLY LETTER.

**A**S a man soweth, so also shall he reap," or words to that effect, are found in the Bible. With us farmers, however, in a farming sense, we go back of sowing to the plowing, and on that depends what we shall reap; and now, as the county papers inform the gentle reader, is the time to do your plowing. Probably the most pleasant work of the year is the first plowing done in the spring. After a winter of discontent, the first warm days come as a boon, and then the tiller of the soil instinctively gets down his horses harness, greases them, rigs up a double-tree, and has a long hunt for that missing-link—the clevis. In a day or two the leading-mind on the farm pronounces the ground in fit condition to be plowed, and with a good team of horses, the plowman follows the plow with feelings akin to pleasure.

So strong is the instinct to plow upon the farmer in the spring that no matter if he has been engaged in other pursuits so long that he has forgotten how to farm, if he has ever had to put in every pretty day in early spring plowing, he is very apt to feel at this time of year that he is neglecting something, and he will rouse up from a fit of abstraction thinking that he should be out plowing.

Retrospection brings before me the days when I followed the furrow in the smooth sod-land that was so nice to plow, and, with the soil encrusted in my shoes, dreamed of days maybe when I might triumph over the drudgery of plowing. Then there were other days passed amidst roots and stumps, when the plowman thought of nothing but how to keep from cussing too much when the horses became restive and the plow-handles, or "stubs," as the Romans called it would punch your insides out when meeting a stump.

Then again in my mind's eye I see a yoke of white Tuckahoe cattle, yoked to a pole and the pole connected by links to the plow. How everything went well until the oxen having plowed one or two rounds considered the matter and refused to work. A thorn-bush did not effect them. When a pitch-fork was brought and they were prodded until their sides were flecked with gore, they responded by "turning the yoke" with a dexterity that would have earned them great applause in a circus. Then the meek-eyed oxen patiently waited for whatever other torture the dismayed plowboy and his helper might devise for them. The yoke being righted, their tails were lashed together, so that the ox vertebrae cracked, the cattle could not turn the yoke.

Then a second pitch-fork being brought the contest was continued. The field was right "fermest" a patch of woods. The oxen finding themselves at the wrong end of the forks suddenly started and heading for the woods went one on either side of a scrub-oak, broke their yoke in two, abandoned the plow, and took each his share of the yoke. Under such circumstances the plowman homeward plods his weary way, or else lies down and dies in his impotent wrath.

It makes me feel so sad when I think how much profanity oxen are responsible for. How those words never cease to vibrate in the air but go echoing down the ages. Those who have never worked oxen think of the placid life the ox-driver leads and do not know that perverseness is bound up in the heart of an ox.

The long, long thoughts of plowmen have done much to shape the ends of nations, for it is not from amid the distractions of the city that the greater number of intellectual giants have come, tho they had the easier task to become famous. It is the farm that produces the leaders of men, and many of the first citizens of the commonwealth have seen the day when they too walked in the furrow all day with the dirt encrusted in their shoes.

## BIOGRAPHIC NOTES.

**REV WILLIAM T. PRICE, Marlin-** ton, West Virginia. *My Dear Sir:* "The Pocahontas Times" of last week has been received, and as a great-grandson and namesake of John McNeel, Sr., I take this method of sincerely thanking you for the biographical sketch that you have prepared and published of a man whose character and life I have ever been taught to hold in the highest esteem.

The knowledge I have of my great-grandfather is purely traditional, but with one link of tradition, and that one my father, the late Paul McNeel, of Pocahontas County, John McNeel, Sr., was born in the year 1745, and was 80 years old when he died,—his death occurring in the year 1825. Paul McNeel was born within sight of his grandfather John's house, in the year 1803. He was consequently 22 years of age at his grandfather's death. There was an intimacy between the two people, as I have often learned from my father, that was only ended by the death of the older McNeel.

Paul McNeel was taken at an early age to live with his grandparents. I have heard him relate an incident, to fix his very earliest recollections of his grand-parents, which was this: His grandmother had given him a piece of wheat-bread and butter, (quite a luxury then), and set the little boy down to eat it. When left alone a large tom-cat came up to divide the boy's meal. A fight followed, and the boy threw the cat in the fire where there happened to be a bed of coals. The coals stuck to the cat's fur—the cat ran and screamed until the boy was scared out of his wits. He too ran home as fast as he could. This occurred when Paul McNeel was 6 years old, in the old house in the rear of the Hon M. J. McNeel's present residence.

As I say, Paul McNeel, at a tender age, became an inmate of his grandparents home, and to a great degree received his early training from them. The death of his mother, Mrs Rachel McNeel, that occurred in 1818, when he was only 15 years old, rendered his dependence on his grand-parents the more necessary. There is a field belonging to the estate of the late Jacob McNeel that my father has frequently, in passing, pointed out to me which he and his grandfather planted in corn, (they doing the dropping), in May, 1825; and in connexion he told how active of body and sound of mind his grand-father was at eighty, and soon after this the old gentleman was seized with pneumonia and died.

I have related these two incidents—the beginning and ending of the acquaintance of these two people,—to show you how thoroughly I have been taught, both by "legend and lay," to know and revere the character of the venerable pioneer. The exact spots where the "White Pole Church" and the "First Camp" were built have been pointed out to me; and, as you suggest, both should be marked by a slab of the marble which is found in such abundance close by.

Martha Davis, the wife of this gentleman, was a Welch girl,—a Calvinistic Methodist,—born in the year 1742, being therefore three years older than her husband. She survived him five years, being 88 years old at the time of her death. You speak of the death of her child during the absence of her husband to Point Pleasant. Of this I have frequently heard, and that she with her own hands prepared the body of her child and performed the first burial rites ever performed at the McNeel graveyard.

There was another matter this lady was the first to do, and for which her name deserves to be kept in dear remembrance, and by this latter act to the living generation she has set an example of the highest Christian character; and that was to bring with her to her new mountain home as a part of her dowry, a Bible printed in the Welsh dialect. A noble exemplar! This is the first Bible that there is any record of having ever been brought to the waters of the Greenbrier; and with all the solemnity attached to this dear old Bible, there have been many amusing anecdotes connected therewith. If Captain McNeel and Dr Matt Wallace have each sufficiently recovered from their recent sickness, I should like you to call on the Captain and get him to relate to you about the Doctor undertaking to read this Bible to one of his patients, an elderly lady whose afflictions were more imaginary than real.

year, and now when we now reflect that this was the year succeeding when the Indians had made the most fearful massacre of the white people in most all the Valley counties, and that the country between the Valley of Virginia and the Ohio River was an unbroken wilderness, we wonder at the adventurous spirit of this remarkable man.

Of the traditional history that I have heard of him, the thing that impressed me most of all was his wonderful sincerity of character and strength of purpose in his daily life. This feature of his character had a powerful influence on his grandson, Paul McNeel, who, as you will have no small degree to his success in after life. And in conclusion will say that during the twenty-seven years it was my pleasure to know my father, I never heard him mention the name of John McNeel, Sr., but with the words of praise upon his lips. And the deep hold that Methodism has held in the Little Levels of Pocahontas for the last hundred years can be explained when I say that the man and woman who built the "White Pole Church" laid the foundation of the Methodist Church; and let us trust that the influence of this humble Christian man and woman will descend from generation to generation, and like the mantle of Elijah prove a blessing on whomsoever it shall fall.

Very truly your friend,  
JOHN A. McNEEL.  
Kerr's Creek, Va., March -1, 1897.

## Nil Desperandum.

Do not despair: Hope on, however dark and forbidding the clouds above you, if need be, hope against hope, for hopefulness is helping and despair is crushing.—killing. *Nil desperandum!* let this be thy motto.

There was a large amount of good sense and fine philosophy, yea of Christian practice, in the manner, tone of voice, and action of a clergyman on a disabled vessel, amid a crowd of panic-stricken passengers who had given up all hope of outriding the storm in their ship's shattered condition. Despair was on every face, and all effort for life had ceased. At this supreme moment one man, calm, hopeful, nerved to greater action by the necessities of the case, arose and spoke words of cheer. I am not relating the shipwreck in which the great and blessed Apostle Paul stood forth and helped that crew by his good will and Christian hope. My incident is of modern times.

The clergyman aforesaid continuing his hopeful words to the frightened and endangered people all gathered on the deck and ready to leap into the sea, calmly took his watch out and began to wind it: "he thinks we may be saved; let us work for it!" was the general feeling that like an electric current ran through the circle, and dull despair, flapping his leaden wings, left the space for the buoyant, white-winged dove of hope. And all those people and the ship itself outrode the storm and lived beyond it. "Nil desperandum" had nearly been forgotten. It was the wise, good clergyman who remembered and whispered hope unto his fellows.

On terra firma the instances are numerous wherein a hopeful spirit it imparts itself to despairing souls and fills them with new energy for the battle of life. In cases of sudden illness or distressing accidents how blessed it is to find a calm and hopeful friend who can speak cheerily and kindle the fire of hope in the cold, black chamber of despair. Not the least help of a good physician in times of sickness and trouble is the cheerful, hopeful look upon his face and in his voice and manner as he goes to work for the benefit of the suffering. Surely God will reward the faithful, hard-working doctor for the constant hopefulness he brings into chambers of pain and its frequent accompaniment of more or less despair.

Hope is of God and it belongs to heaven. Thanks be to God that in this sin-troubled and storm-ridden world it is possible for hope to live and grow and flourish.  
A. L. P.

## Physical Endurance.

Physical endurance is a quality which varies remarkably with different individuals. The performance of feats of great physical strength depends for the most part on the condition to which the muscles have been brought by previous exercise. The power of endurance, on the other hand, is largely a question of inherited constitution. Persons subjected to the same strain, such as a long work boat-race, "play out" at different stages, tho the course of training and manner of living have been identical.

In every-day life the same thing is observed. Men following the same occupation, and living in practically the same manner, perform the same work with decidedly differing degrees of ease. It is a matter of common observation that as a woodsman, a huntsman, or an every-day toiler, he who has quality of physical endurance in greatest measure will excel. The same is true in professional life. Ordinarily it is found that the man who outstrips his fellows has the ability to labor long hours together without exhaustion.

Most men who have been distinguished for great physical endurance have inherited or acquired a state of mind which is doubtless one secret of their ability, namely, freedom from worry. Worry distracts the mind, so that its energies, instead of being concentrated, are divided between two or more trains of thoughts. To the extent of avoiding worry—needless dwelling upon matters that cannot be helped—the power of endurance may be acquired.

Every man's strength has a definite limit, a limit not determined by that of others. His physical endurance may be above the average; it may be below it. He should not go beyond it, whatever it is. Before his physical powers are exhausted, not afterward, he should rest and recuperate. Each individual must of necessity learn his own limits.

The best work is perhaps accomplished by long continued application, but not the point of exhaustion. Exhaustion may often be avoided by changing one work for another, just as difficult, perhaps, but involving another set of faculties. Mental labor consumes the vital properties of the blood just as muscular labor does, and hence it is as important to avoid exhaustion in mental as in physical employment.

Wonderful as the power of endurance appears to be in certain men, it must be remembered that every one is fettered by the law that rules all organized beings. Life moves in a series of circles, and apart of each circle must be devoted to recuperation. Great powers of endurance are, for the most part, the gifts of a vigorous ancestry, to be used in reason and not abused.—The Youth's Companion.

**SUBSTITUTE FOR RUBBER.**—The discovery of a substitute for rubber, which is said, can be produced in large quantities at less than a quarter of the cost of genuine rubber, is announced by a Sonoma county, (Cal.), journal.

The substitute is the product of a tree which grows abundantly in the central part of the state and was discovered by accident. The tree is tapped near the base, and the sap, which is quite a dark color, is caught in a vessel. After being exposed for a day or two a layer of tough elastic material, closely resembling rubber, is formed. If this is taken off another layer will form.

This substance will vulcanize like rubber and, when properly treated, is a perfect substitute for the genuine article. It has been tested by several scientific men who say it will take the place of rubber for almost any purpose.

A company is being formed to put this new material, which has not been named, on the market. The method of treatment is secret. The discoverer says the supply is inexhaustible.

**A CABINET OF "J's."**—It will hardly do to call the new cabinet a set of jays, under any construction of that phrase. But it will be a J body as well as notable for its Mc's. There are in the list:—  
J. Sherman.  
L. J. Gage.  
J. Long.  
J. J. McKenna.  
J. A. Gary.  
J. J. McCook.

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